

Galena Creek Regional Park



Nature Trail Guide

Welcome to Galena Creek Regional Park!

This 1.2 mile loop trail will take you on a relaxing hike through the beautiful forest at the base of Mt. Rose, and along Galena creek.



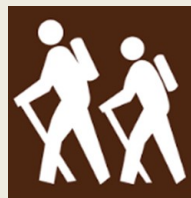
This guide contains information about 18 points of interest and unique features of the park, such as the rare Snow Plant (*Sarcodes sanguinea*), a protected species that you can find in few other places on earth. It lacks chlorophyll, hence the red color. It is a mycotrophic (fungus eating) parasite that benefits from the symbiotic relationship between

trees and fungus in the soil, depleting nutrients produced by the photosynthetic work of other plants.

Please remember to follow the

Leave No Trace “Seven Principals”:

1. Know before you go,
2. Stay on marked trails,
3. Dispose of waste properly,
4. Leave what you find,
5. Only you can prevent wildfires,
6. Respect wildlife and their habitat,
7. Please be considerate of others.



We hope you enjoy your visit to Galena Creek Regional Park, a Washoe County Regional Park. For more information about Galena Creek Regional Park, visit

www.WashoeCountyParks.com



18350 Mt. Rose Highway, Reno NV 775-849-2511

Click on the links and photos in this guide for more information!

1 - Galena Creek

Galena Creek drains the southeast slopes of the 10,776 foot Mount Rose Peak. The creek crosses under Highway 431 and eventually flows into Pleasant Valley between Reno and Carson City, where it becomes part of the Truckee River watershed via Steamboat Creek. It was named for the town of Galena, which was founded near Callahan Road in 1860. The town was named for the locally abundant mineral Galena, a form of iron-sulfide that was often associated with gold deposits found nearby. It was difficult to separate from the gold ore, making the gold less profitable.

Galena ore has a silvery color (right).



2 - Flooding

Galena Creek floods periodically, at times with devastating results. Wet-mantle floods occur during the winter when torrents of rain and melting snow course down the mountain's side. Violent summer thunderstorms, which can drop so much rain in a short period that the ground cannot absorb it, can cause spectacular and destructive dry-mantle floods. The water collects in the creek and increases speed as it travels downhill. Flooding results if the water volume exceeds the creek's holding capacity. One of the most devastating floods on record occurred on New Year's Day in 1997. This flood raised the level of this little creek to over 14 feet and caused extensive damage to roads, bridges and structures. The boulders and rocks that fan out from this area were deposited by floods.



3 - Tobacco Brush

Tobacco Brush (*Ceanothus velutinus*), is also known as snowbrush, or red root because of its seasonal white flowers and its red coloring on the root bark. Despite its name, tobacco brush is not related to the tobacco plant. Stands can grow up to 12 feet tall, forming strong thickets. The long oval leaves, which have three distinct veins and a light, wooly underside, have been used in various ancient medicines, including the treatment of high blood pressure and psoriasis. Some say that it has the scent of cinnamon or fresh tobacco. The seeds that are produced by these shrubs can lay dormant in the soil for many years until their outer coating is stressed, usually by wildfire, triggering germination. This is one way that the forest is able to recover following a wildfire.



4 - Erosion

Erosion is the process of soil deterioration over time, caused by wind, water, gravity and geologic phenomenon. This process is responsible for some of the most beautiful naturally occurring structures in the world, such as how the Colorado River has carved the Grand Canyon over millions of years. Although erosion is a natural geologic process, it can be accelerated by human activity.



STAY ON TRAIL

The creation of trails often leads to erosion if not constructed properly. Staying on established trails helps to reduce the amount of erosion that can occur here. Floods which have cut away much of the creek bed, combined with subsequent erosion, have resulted in the exposed tree roots that are visible directly across the creek.

5 - Jeffrey Pine

The dominant pine tree in Galena Creek Park is the Jeffrey Pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*). In fact, this habitat type is referred to as Jeffrey Pine forest. This species is distinguished by bundles of three 8-10" needles and 5-10" cones with turned-in prickles. This means that the pinecones won't hurt your hand when you pick them up, hence the nickname "Gentle Jeffrey". Try picking up a pinecone to see for yourself, but please put it back for the forest critters! On warm days you can smell vanilla or butterscotch in the crevices of the bark. Ponderosa Pines, which look very similar to Jeffrey Pines, also exist in this area. One way to tell them apart is by their cones. Ponderosa Pines have prickles that turn out—Ouch! Can you guess the nickname for the Ponderosa Pine?



6 - White Fir



Notice the difference between this White Fir (*Abies concolor*) and the Jeffrey Pine? Fir needles grow singularly in flat sprays rather than in bundles, and the bark is light colored. Although some cones are produced every year, most are produced every two to three years. Unlike pine cones, fir cones remain on the tree until maturity. The scales are then shed, leaving a central axis. The fir cones are a favorite food for squirrels.



This tree and the one opposite of it are forked at about the same point on their trunks. This is odd, as they usually grow tall and straight. Several other nearby trees also have forked trunks. It is likely that debris from past floods had taken the tops off of these trees. When this happens, growth occurs from the remaining branches, which turn upward and grow into multiple trunks.

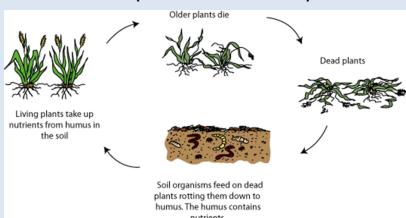
7 - Sagebrush

Perhaps the most widespread and best known shrub in the Great Basin is the Big Sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*). Tridentata means three teeth, and if you look at the light green leaves, you'll see that they have three lobes. Sagebrush also has slender flowering stalks and a pungent smell. Native Americans ate the seeds and made a medicinal tea from the leaves. The plant is slightly toxic, so the tea acted like a natural version of ipecac. Pioneers primarily used sagebrush for firewood. It is the Nevada state flower, as well as a popular habitat and food source for Sage grouse and other birds, rabbits, antelope and Mule deer.



8 - Decomposition

The logs on the ground around you died long ago, but they have not outlived their usefulness. They provide a home for many animals and supports fungi and micro-organisms that help decompose the wood by feeding off of it. Small pieces of wood become organic material in the soil, increasing its ability to hold moisture and help prevent erosion. This also returns nutrients to the soil. This improves the soil for future forests and is one reason why collecting wood or cones is prohibited in the park.



9 - Fish Hatchery

The historic building across the creek is the Galena Creek Fish Hatchery. It represents an attempt to make amends after Nevada's Comstock Lode ravaged the region's ecosystem in the 1860's and 70s. Washoe County operated the fish hatchery from 1931-1949 as an auxiliary to their main facility on the Truckee River in Reno. Galena Creek was ideal because of the continuous supply of uncontaminated water. The hatchery reflects a trend, beginning in the 1920's, to combine habitat conservation with recreation.



Today, The Galena Creek Fish Hatchery is a community hall that can be reserved for social events. Ask a Park Ranger, or call Park Reservations at 775-823-6501 for more details.

10 - Mountain Mahogany

The small tree, or large shrub in the middle of this patch of Manzanita is curl-leaf Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*). A member of the rose family (Rosaceae), It has small, slender leaves with curled edges, and a prominent midrib. It has a wide spreading crown, contorted branches, and a large rough-barked trunk. During the spring, it displays small white-yellow flowers.



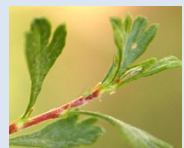
Native Americans would use the bark to treat various ills, make red dye from its roots, and create bows, spear heads, and tools from the limbs because of their durability and strength.

11 - Manzanita

This large patch of Greenleaf Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos patula*) has round, leathery, flat leaves, and red bark. It's name means "little apple" in Spanish. This species often invades burned areas, because fires help the seeds to germinate. If the plant is burned, it will grow from its roots or the burl at its base, a common characteristic of manzanita. It's often confused with tobacco brush.



12 - Bitterbrush



Bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*) is one of the chief browse plants for game animals in parts of the west. It is a deciduous shrub that commonly grows in areas also occupied by sagebrush, Ponderosa Pines and Jeffrey Pines. It also has three-lobed leaves, like the sagebrush, and the scientific name reflects this. In fall and winter, deer come down from higher mountain areas to feed on the young bitterbrush. Its common name, bitterbrush, comes from the bitter taste of the dark green leaves. Native Americans extracted a violet dye by boiling ripe seeds and made bark tea.

13 - Frost Wedging

This large granodiorite boulder is fractured in several straight planes. If you squeezed the pieces together, they would fit very closely. This was probably caused by minute quantities of moisture getting into cracks in the rock and freezing. As the water turned to ice it expanded and exerted pressure on the inside of the rock great enough to cause it to split. This process is known as frost wedging. If you wonder where the trail went, just walk through the rock!



Water-filled
crack



Freezes to
ice



Breaks
Rock



14 - Lichen

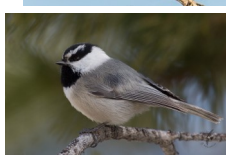
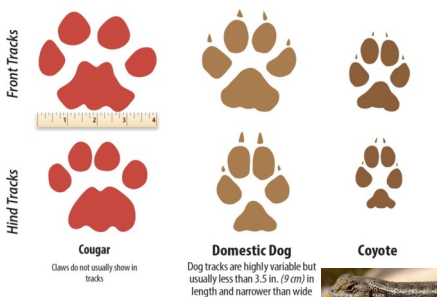


Pronounced "Like-en".

The scaly blotches of color on this rock are lichen. Lichen is fungus and algae coexisting in a symbiotic relationship. In a symbiotic relationship, each species aids the other, often to the point of mutual dependence for survival. This is the case with lichen. Algae make food to share with the fungus, which provides the shelter for the algae. Some lichens will appear "raised" after rain or snow. How many different types and colors of lichens can you find?

15 - Wildlife

Galena Creek Park is home to a diverse population of wildlife. The transition from high desert to alpine forest provides a unique opportunity to view creatures from both habitat types, predators and prey alike! Large mammals such as Coyotes, bobcats, mule deer, black bears and mountain lions may make an appearance on occasion. Small mammals such as grey squirrels, golden-mantled squirrels, weasels, rodents, bats, as well as many bird and reptile species are also commonly found here as well. Please enjoy all wildlife from a distance and remember, Leave No Trace! Look closely as you venture through, and you may spot a track or a scat!



16 - Mistletoe

Notice the scale-like yellowish or brownish leaves and flattened berries of the growth on this Jeffrey pine. This is a parasitic plant, Western dwarf mistletoe (*Arceuthobium campylopodum*). Parasites live off of other organisms, damaging and weakening them. Mistletoe seeds are sticky, and are fired from the parent mistletoe to strike another pine. If they hit, they burrow into the bark, their stems invade the branches, draw nourishment from the tree and cause it to grow in strange ways. If enough mistletoe grows on the pine, the tree cannot grow how it wants to or take in enough water and food to support both itself and the parasite. When this happens, the tree and parasite both die. A parasitized tree is also weaker and more susceptible to disease and deadly invasions by insects.



17 - Galena Campground

You are looking at a remnant of the last Galena campground. It was built in the mid-1940's. In those days people didn't barbeque as we do today. They brought food, wood, pots and pans to the park, built a fire on one of the old stoves you see around you, and cooked their meals on top of it.

P.S. Did you know that the word barbeque comes from the French phrase "barbe à queue", literally meaning from beard to tail? It refers to the traditional pig roasts that people still have at big celebrations.



18 - Cottonwood and Willow

The moisture loving black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) has a round leaf stalk and a long, pointed leaf with a fine-toothed margin. The upper leaf surface is dark and glossy, while the underside is silvery with rusty veins. With age, the gray bark becomes deeply divided into long, narrow plates. Individual trees produce either male or female flowers that cluster on long catkins. The seeds from the female flowers disperse in late June or early July, carried by the wind on tufts of cotton. The black cottonwood's soft wood and proximity to water make it a favored nesting tree for many birds. Quaking aspen, a relative to the Black Cottonwood, can also be found at this elevation.



Narrow-leaved Willow (*Salix exigua*) is the most abundant type of willow found along Galena Creek. It is a deciduous shrub reaching 25 feet in height, and has a long, narrow leaf that is dark green on top, and light green on the bottom. Flowers are produced in catkins in late spring. This willow had many uses for Native Americans; the branches were used as flexible poles and building materials, the smaller twigs were used to make baskets, the bark was made into cord and string, and the bark and leaves had could be made into medicine to relieve cold symptoms.



From all of us at Galena Creek Regional Park, we hope that you have enjoyed using this guide in your exploration of the park. We welcome your questions, feedback or suggestions! Email us at abrown@washoecounty.us

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